

BCW/ 2021/ Interested parties Meeting

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

Minutes of the meeting held via MS Teams at 14:30pm on Friday 5th March 2021.

Present:

Mrs Justice Jefford DBE	Deputy Chair
Mr Huw Vaughan Thomas CBE	Commissioner
Mrs Shereen Williams MBE OStJ	Commission Secretary
Mr Tom Jenkins	Commission Secretariat
Mr Rhydian Fitter	Commission Secretariat
Mr Aled Roberts	Welsh Language Commissioner
Dr Eleri James	Welsh Language Commissioner
Mr Christopher Warner	Welsh Government
Mr Leighton Jones	Welsh Government

1. Welcomes and Introductions

- 1.1. The Deputy Chair opened the meeting.
- 1.2. The Deputy Chair introduced herself and explained that one Commissioner, Huw Vaughan Thomas was in attendance, along with Commission Secretariat members and representatives from Interested Parties.

2. Apologies for Absence

- 2.1. There were apologies for absence from Sam Hartley (Commissioner) and Rhys George (Association of Electoral Administrators).

3. Background and Purpose

- 3.1. The Deputy Chair gave a background to the review and what would be discussed during the meeting.

4. Number of Constituencies and Electoral Quota

- 4.1. The Deputy Chair stated the number of constituencies and the electoral quota for each constituency as set out by the Act.
- 4.2. There are 32 constituencies in Wales and the UK Electoral quota is 73, 393. The Commission will, by law, have to remain with 5% above or below this figure. With the exception of Ynys Mon, every constituency the Commission proposes as part of the 2023 Review must have between 69, 724 and 77, 062 electors.

5. Timetable

- 5.1. The Deputy Chair set out the foreseen timetable for the review and when the Commission envisages reaching the different milestones of the review.

- Review Launch- January 2021.
- Publication of Guide to the Review- March 2021.
- Initial Proposals Publication- September 2021.
- Initial Proposals Consultation Period- September 2021- November 2021.
- Secondary Consultation Period including public hearings- January 2022- February 2022.
- Revised Proposals Publication- September 2022.
- Revised Proposals Consultation Period- September 2022- October 2022.
- Final Recommendations- June 2023.

5.2. The Commission will be submitting their Final Recommendations in June 2023.

6. Development of Proposals

6.1. The Commission will consider several factors from Rule 5 in Schedule 2, when establishing a new map of constituencies for the 2023 Review.

6.2. The Commission will seek to avoid splitting electoral wards between constituencies and create constituencies from whole electoral wards where it is possible to do so.

7. Constituency Names and Designation

7.1. The Commission is required to specify a name and designation for each proposed constituency.

7.2. The Commission considers it appropriate for each constituency in Wales to have alternative names in English and Welsh to ensure that both languages are treated equally. There will be exceptions for constituencies where the name is the same in Welsh and English.

7.3. The Commission will adopt compass point names when there is not a more suitable name.

8. Consultations

8.1. The Act sets out three consultation periods for the Review.

8.2. The online consultation portal for the 2023 Review is currently in development and will be ready in time for the publication of the Initial Proposals and the subsequent consultation period.

8.3. The Commission will publish all representations received during the consultation periods on the website and online consultation portal.

8.4. The Commission intends to produce a small number of hard copies of the report in English and Welsh for all those on the distribution lists deemed necessary. Other interested parties will receive letters directing them to the Commission website, online consultation portal and to the places of deposit.

9. Public Hearings

9.1. The Deputy Chair explained that a recruitment exercise will be carried out to appoint Assistant Commissioners to run the public hearings.

9.2. The Commission are aware of the current restrictions on travel and large gatherings and the four Boundary Commissions are currently exploring options to incorporate virtual elements into the public hearings. A guide to public hearings will be published in due course.

- 9.3. Following consideration of the representations the Commission will hold the maximum number of five public hearings in Wales. An amendment to the Act means the public hearings will be held in the Second Consultation Period. The location of the public hearings will be decided considering the representations received during the Initial Consultation Period.
- 9.4. The public hearings will be open to the public and all stakeholders.

10. Any Further Questions

- 10.1. The representative from the WLC explained that the WLC have a statutory responsibility to maintain the register of Welsh place names and due to this the Commission are welcome to any advice when choosing place names for constituencies. The Deputy Chair thanked the WLC representative for his offer.
- 10.2. The representative from the WG asked the Commission if they foresee any challenges around names, in relation to the existing Senedd constituencies and any reform that could come to the Senedd constituencies in the upcoming Senedd elections. The Deputy Chair explained that the Guide to the Review will make clear that Senedd boundaries as they are or may be, are not a matter the Commission take into account and will not affect the Commissions recommendations. The Commission will include names of constituencies in the proposals and this will be open for consultation and representations. If representations are made by reference to what similar constituencies might be called in the context of the Senedd, then those representations will be taken account of as part of the normal consultation process. The Commission will not give special status to names that are attached to Senedd constituencies.

The meeting closed at 15:00pm.